

Exodus Chapters 18 to 20 (Parshat Yitro)
an English version by Len Fellman
Current version: February 16, 2021
showing both cantillation systems for the Ten Commandments

18:1 [Then heard] Jethro, priest of Midian, *chotein*—father-in-law—of Moses,
[all about] what was done by God for Moses, and for Israel His people: [He had taken]—YHWH—[had brought out Israel] from Egypt.
2 [He brought along]—Jethro, *chotein* of Moses—brought Zipporah, wife of Moses after [she had been sent away].
3 Also her two sons, of which the name of the first was Gershon [*sojourner there*], because he had said, “A stranger was I in a foreign land”.
4 The name of the other son was Eliezer [*God’s help*],
[he having said, “The God] of my father was my help; [he rescued me] from the sword of Pharaoh.”
5 [And so there came] Jethro, *chotein* [or father-in-law of Moses], with Moses’ sons and his wife,
to Moses [to the wilderness], [for in fact Moses] was camping there, at the mountain of God.
6 And he said to Moses, “[It is I], your *chotein* Jethro, who have come to you, [together with your wife] and her two sons with her.
7 So came out Moses to meet his father-in-law, [and he bowed down] and kissed him.
Each one asked about the other’s welfare, and they went [into the tent].
8 [And he recounted]—Moses spoke—to his *chotein* [telling about] all that God had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt on behalf of Israel,
about [all the hardships] that had [befallen them] on the way, [but they were rescued] by YHWH.
9 And rejoiced Jethro over all of the good which had been done by YHWH to Israel, whom he had delivered, from the hand of Egypt.
10 Then said Jethro, “Blessed is YHWH who has rescued [all of you] from the hand of Egypt, and from the hand of Pharaoh,
and who has rescued the people from under the hand of Egypt.
11 Now I know that greater is YHWH [than all the other gods], [present even] in the occasion where they were plotting against them.
12 [He then brought]—Jethro, *chotein* [or father-in-law of Moses]—a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and there came Aaron
[and there also came] | all the elders of Israel, [there to eat bread] [end aliyah] with the *chotein* of Moses, in the presence of God.
13 Now it was on the morrow; Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moses from daybreak until sunset.

18:14 When he saw—the *chotein* of Moses—[all of the things] that Moses had to do for the people,
 [he spoke these words]: “[What kind of a thing] is this [that I see] that you are doing for the people?
 [Why in fact] do you sit there all alone [while all of the people] stands around you, from daybreak to sunset?
 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, “[They come] [here to me]—the people—to inquire of God,
 16 [When there is] [for the people] a concern, they come to me. I then judge between a man and his fellow,
 [and I make known] the statutes of God and His torahs (instructions).
 17 [Then there spoke] the *chotein* of Moses to him: “[It is not good]—this thing, that which you are doing.
 18 You will get worn out, [you yourself] as well as this people, that is here with you, since heavy for you is this task. You cannot do it alone.
 19 [And so now], listen to my voice: and I will advise you, and God will be there with you.
 [Standing will be] you [for the people], facing *Elohim*. [You will bring]—[yes, you yourself], their concerns to God.
 20 Make clear [to them] the laws and the instructions, and make [known to them] the way [that they] must walk, and the things that they must do.
 21 And you [must have the vision] [to choose out of all of the people] [men of great stature], [men who have awe] [of *Elohim*],
 men of truth, hating injustice.
 [You will set them] [over the people] as leaders of thousands, as leaders of hundreds, as leaders of fifties, as leaders of tens.
 22 And [they will judge the people] [at all times], [and it must be], [that every case] that is great [they will bring] [to you],
 but every case that is small [will be judged by them]. [Make it thus light] [for yourself]; [let them bear it] with you.
 23 If the advice I give here [you will act upon], [and if you are so commanded] by God, you will be able to bear it,
 and also [all these people] here [end aliyah] to their own place they will go home in peace.
 24 And heeded Moses the voice of his father-in-law, [and he carried out] all that the latter had asked.
 25 [And thus did choose] Moses [men of stature] [from out of all Israel], and appointed [these men] as heads over the people:
 as leaders of thousands, as leaders of hundreds, as leaders of fifties, as leaders of tens.
 26 They then judged the people, [every time]. Cases that were difficult they brought before Moses, but all cases minor were judged by them.
 27 Then sent Moses [his father-in-law off], [end aliyah] and he made his way back to his own land.

19:1 On the third New Moon* after the departure of Israel from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came to the desert of Sinai.

2 Having journeyed [from Rephidim], they entered the wilderness of Sinai, [and pitched camp] in the desert.

[There they camped—Israel—facing the mountain.

3 And Moses ascended to God, [where there called out] [to him] YHWH from the mountain, [and said to him],

“Thus you must say to the family of Jacob; [give this message] to *B’nei Yisrael*:

4 ‘You surely have seen that which I did to the Egyptians. [And I carried] you on wings of eagles, and I brought you to Myself.

5 [So now you must know], if you hearken, and obey My voice, and hold fast to My covenant,

[then you will be] [to Me] [a special treasure] among all the peoples, [since to Me] [belongs the whole earth].

6 [And furthermore, you] [will be unto Me] a kingdom of priests; a people most holy.

[These then] are the words [end aliyah] that you must convey to the children of Israel.’ ”

7 [So he went back]—Moses—and summoned the elders of the people,

[and he set] [before them] all the words [he just heard], through which he was commanded by YHWH.

8 Then answered [all the people] as one, saying this: “[All that was spoken of] by YHWH [we will do].”

[Their answer was then brought back] [by Moses himself]—these words of the people—to YHWH.

9 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Here is what I will do: [I will come]—[I will descend upon you]—in the thickness of a cloud,

[for the purpose] [that they will hear]—the people—when I am speaking to you, [so that also in you (Moses)], they will trust for all time.”

And Moses [related these words]—the response of the people, to YHWH.

10 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Go to the people. Make them holy today, and tomorrow: have them scrub their clothes,

11 that they may be ready, on the third day, [because it will be] right [on the third day]

[that God will descend]—YHWH—in the eyes of all the people, there on Mount Sinai.

12 Set boundaries for the people [around the mountain], saying, “[You must be wary] [for yourselves],

of ascending the mountain, or even touching its base. Anyone touching the mountain shall be put to death.

13 On such a person, [do not lay a hand]. He will surely be stoned or cut down. Neither beast nor man [on the mountain may live].

[At a long blast] [of the ram’s horn]—only then—shall they go up on the mountain.”

19:14 [And so he descended]—[Moses came down]—[from the mountain], to the people.
 He made holy the people: [they scrubbed clean] their clothing.

15 And he said to the people, “You must be ready by the third day. Do not touch a woman.

16 [And it happened] on the third day, as there appeared [the morning light], [there occurred] sounds of thunder, and lightning,
 and a cloud—one quite thick—on the mountain, and a sound from the shofar, a loud blast indeed.

And they trembled—all the people, that were in the camp.

17 [And he led them]: [Moses proceeded] [to bring out the people], toward *Elohim*,
 [coming out of the camp]. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

18 And Mount Sinai was smoking all over, [on account of the fact] [that there had] descended [upon it]—YHWH in fire.
 [There went up] its smoke like the smoke from a furnace, and there shook the whole mountain, exceedingly.

19 All the while, the sound of the shofar kept on getting stronger indeed. Moses would speak, [end aliyah] and *Elohim* would answer in thunder.

20 [And thus descended] YHWH on Mount Sinai, at the top of the mountain.
 [God called out]—YHWH [called Moses forth] to the peak of the mountain, and Moses went up.

21 And said YHWH to Moses, “Go down, and warn the people,
 [lest they break through] to YHWH to see, and there is lost from their midst, a great number.

22 [And even the priests]—[*ha cohanim*], who draw near to YHWH, must be purified, lest there burst forth against them—YHWH.

23 [Then there spoke] Moses to YHWH, “[They are not able]—the people—to come up to Mount Sinai,
 [since You Yourself] [gave us a warning], [when you said] ‘Set bounds for the mountain, [and make it holy].’ ”

24 And responded [to him] YHWH, “[Go then: descend]. You will come back—both you and Aaron, [with you].
 But the priests [and the people] [will not break through] to go up to YHWH, [lest God burst forth against them].

25 So he went down—Moses—to the people, [and conveyed this] [to them].

20:1 Then spoke *Elohim* all of the words that follow, saying:

(The 10 commandments follow, in the “ta’amei ha elyon” version. The “ta’amei ha tachton” version is given starting on page 10.)

Exodus 20:2-14(17):

The Ten Commandments – בטעם העליון (*siluk only at the end of commandments 2-10*)

*This cantillation is taken from the Stone Edition Tanach. It is also used in 'Navigating the Bible II'.
(A recording in English by Len accompanies this file. It is modelled on the reading by Cantor Moshe Haschel in 'Navigating the Bible II':
<http://bible.ort.org/books/torahd5.asp?action=displaypage&book=2&chapter=20&verse=2&portion=17>*

(נוסח הדפוסים לפי)

The other cantillation—ta'amei ha tachton—is given at the end of the translation).

v.2 1st commandment – believe in God

20:2 “I am YHWH your God, the One [who brought you out] from the land of Egypt—from a house of slavery.

vv.3-6 2nd commandment – no graven images

3 There will not [be for you] other gods [before My face].

4 Do not make for yourself a carved image—[indeed any likeness or form] that is found in the skies—
[either in the heavens above]—[or that is found] on the earth below, [or that is found] [in the waters] that lie [beneath the earth].

5 [Do not bow down] [to these things] and do [not serve them], since [I am indeed] YHWH your God—a God Who is zealous,
[Who calls to account] the sins [of the ancestors] [upon the children] to the third and fourth generation [of those that hate Me],

6 but showing kindness to thousands: [to those that love me] and that keep my commandments.

v.7 3rd commandment – don't take God's name in vain

7 Do [not take up] the name of YHWH your God in vain,
[for indeed] [he is not] absolved by YHWH—[that person]—who takes God's name in vain.

vv. 8-11 4th commandment – keep the Sabbath

8 [You must remember] the day of the Sabbath [to sanctify it].

9 [For there are six] days [on which you can labor] and do [all your work], *alt. tr.: [Eloheicha your God]

10 but day the seventh [is for you a sabbath] for YHWH [Who is your God]*. On it [you must not do] [whatsoever manner of work]—
not you, [your son or your daughter], your servant or maidservant, [or your animal], or your alien who is [within your gates],

20:11 because [in six days] did make YHWH the heavens [and the earth], the sea [and all that is in it], and God rested on day number seven.
[Because of this fact] [blessed it was] [by YHWH]—[this day of the Sabbath]—[God made it holy].

v.12 5th commandment – honor your father and mother

12 Honor your father and your mother, in order that there be lengthened your days upon [the very land] that YHWH your God is giving to you.

6th commandment – don't kill

13 [You must not] kill.

7th commandment – don't commit adultery

13a (14)* [You must not] commit adultery. *(There are two verse-numbering systems used, as shown here)

8th commandment – don't steal

13b (15) [You must not] steal.

9th commandment – no false witness

13c (16) Do not testify against your neighbor falsely.

10th commandment – don't covet

14 (17) Do not covet the house of your neighbor, [and do not desire] the wife [of your neighbor],
his servant or his maidservant, his ox or his donkey, [end aliyah] [nor anything] that belongs to your neighbor.”

20:15 (18) [And all of the people] witnessed the thunder [and the flashes of light], as well as the sound of the shofar, and the mountain in smoke.
[When they saw it], the people trembled, and they stood at a distance.

16 (19) They said to Moses, “If you yourself speak to us, we will listen, [but let not God speak] [to us]—not Elohim—lest we die.”

17 (20) Then [said Moses] [to the people], “[Do not be afraid]. [What is happening now]—[it is for the purpose] of testing you—
this appearance of God (Elohim), [and in order that] [there be upon you] [the true fear of God], [even seen on your faces], so that you will not sin.

18 (21) So the people kept standing far off, while Moses drew near [to the heavy cloud], [in which there was seen] Elohim.

19 (22) Then said YHWH to Moses, “This you must say to B'nei Yisrael,
‘You yourselves have seen that [it was from the heavens] that I spoke with you.

20(23) You shall not make [beside Me] gods of silver or gods of gold—these do not make for yourselves.

20:21 (24) An altar [made out of earth] [you must make for Me]. You will sacrifice [on it] [your burnt offerings] [and your peace offerings], your sheep, and your cattle. [In every place] at which I make known My name, I will come to you, and bless you.

22 (25) If an altar of stone [you would make for Me], you must not build it from cut stones, [because by so wielding] [your chiseling tool] over the altar, [you have profaned it].

23 (26) Do not go up by steps to My altar, [in order that] [end aliyah] there not exposed be your nakedness, [upon it].’ ”

Exodus 20:2-14(17):

The Ten Commandments – בטעם התהתוו

(a siluk at the end of each conventionally-numbered short pasuk)

2 1st commandment – believe in God

20:2 “I am YHWH your God—I am the One [who brought you out] from the land of Egypt—from a house of slavery.

3-6 2nd commandment – no graven images

3 [There will not] [be for you] other gods [before My face].

4 Do not make [for yourself] a carved image—[indeed any likeness] [that is found] in the heavens above—or that is found on the earth below, or that is found in the waters beneath the earth.

5 Do not bow down to these things, and do not serve them, since [I am indeed] YHWH your God—a God Who is zealous, [a God who calls to account] the sins [of the ancestors] [upon the children] to the third and fourth generation, [of those that hate Me],

6 but showing kindness to thousands: [to those that love me] and that keep my commandments.

7 3rd commandment – don't take God's name in vain

7 Do [not take up] the name of YHWH your God in vain, [for indeed] [he is not] absolved by YHWH—[that person]—who takes God's name in vain.

8-11 4th commandment – keep the Sabbath

8 [You must remember] the day of the Sabbath [to sanctify it].

9 [For there are six] days [on which you can labor] and do [all your work],

(בטעם התחתון) *continued*)

20:10 but day the seventh [is a sabbath] for YHWH your God. On it you must not do any work—
not you, your son [or your daughter], your servant or maidservant, or your animal, or your alien who is within your gates,
11 because [in six days] did make YHWH the heavens [and the earth], the sea [and all that is in it], and God rested on day number seven.
[Because of this fact] [blessed it was] [by YHWH]—[this day of the Sabbath]—[God made it holy].

12 5th commandment – honor your father and mother

20:12 Honor your father and your mother, in order that there be lengthened your days upon [the very land] that YHWH your God is giving to you.

13 6th to 9th commandments – don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, no false witness

13(-16) You must not kill. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. Do not testify against your neighbor as a lying witness.

14 10th commandment – don't covet

14(17) Do not covet the house of your neighbor, [and do not desire] the wife [of your neighbor],
his servant or his maidservant, his ox or his donkey, [end aliyah] [nor anything] that belongs to your neighbor.”

iticians ויקרא

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WITH THE TROP (CANTILLATION NOTES) USED BY THE READER FOR THE PUBLIC TORAH READING ON THE SABBATH AND ON SHAVUOS (see page 182).

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים לֹא
יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה
אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּמִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם וּמִתַּחַת
לָאָרֶץ לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל
קָנָא פֶקֶד עוֹן אֲבֹת עַל-בְּנִים עַל-שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים לְשֹׂנְאֵי וְעֹשֵׂה
חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים לְאֹהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי: לֹא תִשָּׂא
אֶת-שֵׁם-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹא כִּי לֹא יִנָּקֶה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִשָּׂא אֶת-
שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוֹא:

זְכוֹר וְאֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעֹשִׂיתָ כָּל-
מְלֶאכֶתְךָ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת וּלְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-
מְלֶאכֶה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתְךָ וּבְהֶמְתְּךָ וּגְרֶךָ אֲשֶׁר
בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-
הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל-כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת-
יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ: כִּבֵּד אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אִמְךָ לְמַעַן
יָאָרְכוּן יְמֶיךָ עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ: לֹא
תִרְצָח: לֹא תִנָּאֵף: לֹא תִגְנוֹב: לֹא תַעֲנֶה
בְּרֵעֶךָ עַד שֹׁקֶר: לֹא תַחְמוֹד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא-תַחְמוֹד
אֶשֶׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ וַאֲמָתוֹ וְשׁוֹרֹ וַחֲמֹרֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ:

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh or yetiv kadma or pashta gersh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, gersh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (or: azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
⌞Renew our days⌟	⌞She weeps bitterly⌟	⌞a fire-offering to God⌟

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalsholet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “God” or “Adonai”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)